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UNCLAS ROME 001010

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SUBJECT: CHILE/WORLD FOOD PROGRAM CONFERENCE TO LAUNCH A
PRIVATE-PUBLIC LATIN AMERICAN SCHOOL FEEDING NETWORK - MARCH
24-26, 2004

REF: (A) 03 ROME 004879

Summary

1. The World Food Program (WFP), the Chilean Board of Educational Assistance and Scholarships (JUNAEB), and the U.S.-based American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) plan to jointly launch a Latin American independent school-feeding support network at a Conference in Santiago, Chile, March 24-26, 2004. At this event, the above mentioned parties will bring together approximately 700 school feeding stakeholders from a cross-section of society, including key government officials, private company representatives, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and UN agencies. US Mission/Rome is highly supportive of this new initiative and will work with WFP Headquarters to explore how the partnership can be further nurtured. End summary.

Background

2. In February, 2003, the World Food Program (WFP), the Chilean Board of Educational Assistance and Scholarships (JUNAEB), and the American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) signed a letter of intent to develop an independent school feeding network to improve and sustain school feeding activities in the future throughout Latin America. The parties are committed to developing a sustainable organization, capable of expanding school feeding activities through the strengths of the private sector and through partnerships that engage a wider commitment from all areas of the community. This independent school-feeding support network is to be formally launched at a Conference in Santiago, Chile, March 24-26, 2004.

3. The World Food Program, the United Nation's front line food agency, has more than 40 years of experience in school feeding programs. It will draw from these experiences and its Global School Feeding Campaign to promote the network and secure long-term funding.

4. JUNAEB operates the national school-feeding program in Chile and serves 1.3 million students daily. Its programs demonstrate a strong national commitment to effective school feeding activities with a history of successful private sector involvement. Using the strengths of its own activities, JUNAEB will help develop a network that meets the complex needs of school feeding operations throughout the region.

5. The American School Food Service Association is a U.S.

non-profit professional association that promotes child nutrition programs, monitors legislation and administers certification and credentialing programs to ensure school nutrition professionals excel on the job. The Association will bring the expertise of its 52 state affiliates, hundreds of local chapters and more than 55,000 members to help create an effective membership-based network in Latin America.

Activities envisaged under the partnership

6. Herewith a summary of the activities envisioned:

-JUNAEB will provide in-kind donations and some support

services at the conference and afterwards to help launch the network in the region.

-JUNAEB will provide legal advice regarding local (Chilean) laws as the network is established in Santiago.

-ASFSA will provide critical knowledge about the structure and operation of its membership-based network.

-ASFSA will provide advice on the development and management of education and certification courses that ensure quality food distribution practices.

-WFP will offer technical expertise in the area of program management, commodity procurement and the use of new products on the market.

-WFP will offer administrative support during the initial planning phases and leading up to the launch of the network.

Objectives of the Network

17. The Parties will combine their strengths to create a financially independent school feeding network that will provide technical assistance, health-related information to achieve substantial gains in the fight against hunger. The Parties will create a model for responsible and sustainable private sector relationships that can be used to supplement current government support, increase the diversity of donors and types of donations to school feeding activities.

18. The Parties will work with traditional and new models for partnerships with relevant organizations and donors that use schools and school-feeding activities as a base for actions (such as nutrition and agricultural education, literacy training, de-worming and other health and sanitation measures) and involve the entire community.

Comment

19. This idea was first proposed at a 1999 Seminar of Latin American Education Ministers in Medellin, Colombia and received the support of the First Ladies of the Americas Network. There are a number of on-going public-private partnerships including the laudable civil-society led Global Campaign for Education and Harvest Plus programs. Unfortunately, some private sector initiatives remain confined to philanthropy and one-off projects. US Mission/Rome is highly supportive of this new initiative and will work with WFP Headquarters to explore how the partnership can be further nurtured. I am especially pleased to see how regional initiatives such as this one (along with the West African "Alliance for Action" on School Feeding in the Sahel) are multiplying. The USG investment in global school feeding through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education Program is already paying dividends. We should do whatever we can to support efforts like this one and encourage others. Hall